

**Washington, DC** - Today, the United States House of Representatives voted on a conference report of the U.S. Troop Readiness, Veterans' Health and Iraq Accountability Act. The measure, passing 218-208, will now go to the United States Senate for a vote before heading to the White House for the President's consideration.

The measure allocates appropriate funding for the war in Iraq while simultaneously displaying strong, genuine support for our troops. Most importantly, the legislation provides for a responsible redeployment of troops out of Iraq by March of 2008. The bill also funds key domestic initiatives, including a provision that allocates \$3.1 billion to fully fund the Base Realignment and Closure recommendations for 2007.

Congressman Charles Gonzalez (TX-20) issued the following statement, hailing the passage of this bill:

"This bill provides a much needed change to our country's Iraq policy and finally signals the start of a new direction in Iraq. Most importantly, this bill does what the Bush Administration has failed to do over four years - provide a responsible timeline for redeployment of our troops out of harms way.

"The benchmarks created for the Iraqis, and timetables tied to these benchmarks for U.S. redeployment, are imperative in that they finally place responsibility and accountability in the hands of the Iraqis. The sectarian differences in Iraq, and the resulting violence, are problems that only the Iraqi people can solve. Our brave men and women have done all that has been asked of them, but regardless of the number of American troops we deploy and the length of their deployment in Iraq, the fact remains that the sectarian differences can only be resolved by the Iraqi people.

"We can no longer uphold an open-ended Iraq policy that ignores the lessons of history, the views of our military leaders, and the will of the American people. The genuine support for our troops in this bill is represented by its responsible plan to bring our brave men and women home, away from the crossfire of a bloody Iraqi civil war. President Bush owes our men and women in uniform this much, and I call on him to display his support by signing this legislation."

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